

Theodore loved to read science fiction comic books after his mother and father kissed him goodnight. He was not allowed to stay up past nine o'clock. After his parents went to bed, Theodore turned on his little flashlight, crawled into the fort in the corner of his room that he had made from his bedspread, and read scary comics. His parents did not like his spending money on the strange cartoons, and his friends thought he was weird, but Theodore liked the stories and read them anyway.

After reading the "Invaders from Mars" edition, Theodore went to sleep, and soon he began to dream about what he had read. A bright light shone over his neighborhood and something changed the people Theodore knew. Theodore's sixth-grade teacher became very different. She offered candy to all of her students in an odd voice. "Would you care for a piece of candy?" she asked all of her pupils. Theodore was astonished because Miss Ratcher would not even allow gum or mints on the playground! Then Theodore noticed that after his friends had eaten the candy, they, too, spoke in strange voices and seemed to have glazed eyes. Theodore did not take a piece of candy and all eyes were upon him.

"Are you sure you will not have a piece of candy? It is chocolate fudge and very delicious," said Miss Ratcher with a forceful look. For the first time, Theodore felt frightened. When Miss Ratcher realized that Theodore was not going to eat the candy, she turned her back to the class and began writing the day's lesson on the board. To his horror, Theodore saw that Miss Ratcher had a small white bandage on the back of her neck, and around the bandage he saw flecks of black and bits of dried blood.

Then Theodore realized that his classmates had the same things on the backs of their necks, and he panicked because he did not know whom to trust. He saw that they were closing in on him, so he ran out of the classroom yelling.

Then he felt someone grab his arms and he tried to fight them off. "Theodore, wake up! Wake up, darling. You are having a bad dream," said his mother. Theodore woke up and laughed. "I don't think I will read any more comics, Mom," he said.

That morning Theodore arrived at school late. He raced into his classroom. Miss Ratcher smiled and said, "Hello, Theodore. Would you like a piece of fudge that I made?"

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